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ABSTRACT

In 1974, the Career Development and Renewal Program (CDRP) was created to train staff in the Dallas County Community College District (DCCCD) for placement in three new District colleges. Currently, the program offers renewal and career-path training to staff; provides for a bank of personnel for internal promotion opportunities; and broadens employee understanding of the DCCCD and community college education. To participate in the CDRP, an employee must have supervisory approval and a proposed project of quality. After projects have been selected, a formal set of activities is planned for the participants including an orientation, four workshops, special activities (e.g., attendance at DCCCD board and council meetings), and the formulation of goals acceptable to both participant and supervisor. With time-frames varying from a full academic year to one day a week for a semester, the projects involve internships in vertical advancement positions; understudy activities whereby an employee shadows another staff member working in an area in which he/she wishes to pursue career opportunities; and special research or study projects. As there is currently no budget for the program, most participants' time is given voluntarily and in addition to their required job responsibilities. Since 1975, 33 faculty members, 47 administrators, and 31 non-contract employees have participated in the program, and current plans call for the expansion of the CDRP into university and business settings. (HB)

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LOW COST/HIGH VALUE STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

JACKIE MOE CASWELL

In the 70's, staff development became a priority for higher education. Books and articles on recommended approaches toward enhancing community college staff proliferated. Special efforts, such as the 1973 AACJC Assembly and the National Council for Staff, Program and Organization Development were initiated. Conference themes, both nationally and locally, focused on various types of staff development endeavors which were being offered. Community colleges were growing, budgets were healthy, grants were available and staff development was a prominent issue.

Staff development continues to be one of the most important components of successful and progressive community colleges in the 80's. However, the thrust is more refined and pragmatic. Declining resources have forced decision makers to implement programs for staff renewal which are of high value and low cost; programs which will encourage staff growth and advancement in a cost-effective, administratively productive manner.

At the Dallas County Community College District (DCCCD), a program of internships provides staff renewal that is cost-effective. The Dallas Career Development and Renewal Program (CDRP) is an opportunity for creative rejuvenation with the least amount of cost for the benefit achieved. The program is flexible, yet structured; creative, yet practical; challenging, yet attainable.

This staff development program has a proven record of success. It is an adaptable, renewal opportunity that can work in other community colleges whether multi-campus or single-college districts. The program's flexibility and low cost enables any institution to adapt the structure to its setting. Coordination of the project does not require the establishment of a new staff position, but rather the assigned time of creative and committed personnel. Once the structure is in place, there is no limit to the quality of growth for the individual, for an improved

college setting due to internal renewal, and for the enhancement of the total educational environment for employees as well as students. The program allows community colleges to give staff development the priority it deserves without excessive allocation of resources.

The Career Development and Renewal Program is a benefit to the individual, to the seven DCCCD colleges and to the total institution. Thirty percent of the participants have been promoted into the positions for which they interned or understudied. (This percent does not include the current class.) Participants gain the opportunity to learn more about all major areas of the DCCCD and about major issues facing the community college. Some participants return to their incumbent positions not wishing to move into the career path position they studied. However, they return with a broader understanding of their role in the institution and how they contribute to its success. The talents and abilities the participants bring to the program enrich each individual and provide for more linkages and better understanding among the seven DCCCD colleges and the central office. The total institution benefits from providing career path opportunities to employees and from the expansion of employees' horizons. The amount of staff time involved in coordinating the program is many times multiplied by the resulting value of employee job satisfaction and enrichment.

The Program in Action

The Career Development and Renewal Program was developed in 1974 to train staff for placement in the three new DCCCD colleges which would be fully operational by 1978. Although all administrative positions in these new institutions would not be staffed from within the ranks of the four existing colleges, the intent was to establish continuity in all seven institutions while recognizing the potential of present staff through this training program. The program was operational the fall of 1975 with the first group of thirteen participants selected through an application and screening process.

Since 1975, 111 employees (54 males and 57 females) have actively participated in the Career Development and Renewal Program. Non-contractual personnel were included, in 1977, based upon recommendation by DCCCD leaders that non-contractual staff have the same opportunities for professional growth as contractual personnel. An overview of employee participation by classification indicates that 33 faculty, 47 administrators, and 31 non-contractual employees have been active members in this program.

The primary focus of the program is no longer to fill positions for new colleges. Rather, it is threefold: to offer renewal and career-path training to staff; to provide for a bank of trained personnel for internal promotion opportunities; and to broaden and enhance employee understanding of the DCCCD and community college education.

To participate in the Career Development and Renewal Program an employee must have supervisory approval and a proposed project of some quality. Application is made during mid-spring of each year. Notification of availability of the program is facilitated through college newsletters and word-of-mouth recommendation by supervisors and peers who often were former Career Development and Renewal Program participants. No other form of publicity is used, at this point, to attract staff to the program.

Program participants assume primary responsibility for fulfilling their stated goals. However, the participant is not without guidance throughout the term of his/her designated project. Each participant has the assistance of a mentor. Together with the mentor and the staff coordinators for the program, a participant may seek assistance at any time. However, the success of completed goals and objectives corresponds highly to the amount of self-determination and assertiveness contributed by the participant.

After the selection process in mid-spring, a formal set of activities is planned for the participants. These include: an orientation, four workshop sessions, and various special activities. Participants must also complete a

a formal set of goals and objectives which are mutually agreeable to both the participant and the mentor. Each participant is evaluated by the mentor on the fulfillment of these goals and objectives at the conclusion of the timeline for his/her project.

Three Approaches

Project timelines may vary from as much as a full academic year to as little as one-day-a week for a semester. Usually, the participant's timeframe directly relates to the type of project being pursued. There are three formal categories: Internships, Understudies, and Special Projects. An intern replaces another professional employee, usually higher in rank, and generally on sabbatical or developmental leave. An understudy shadows another employee in an area in which he/she wishes to pursue a career opportunity. Special Project participants devote their time to the research or completion of a study related to a particular issue such as retention, productivity or marketing.

Placement for interns may produce an organizational "domino effect" when the incumbent position is not vacant. If the "domino effect" occurs, it allows for an upward opportunity for several staff to intern in vertical advancement situations. An example of a "domino effect" internship would be a division chair interning as a vice president of instruction. The vice president would then intern or understudy a college president, with the college president interning or understudying a vice chancellor position or undertaking a special project. In essence, the placement of one intern may cause several other renewal opportunities due to upward shifting of positions. The only internal cost necessitated from this staff exchange would be payment for part-time instructors to fill the faculty teaching role.

Understudies and Special Projects do not require any staff replacements as these projects are purely voluntary activities to be accomplished over-and-above the staff member's job responsibilities. Often, understudy activities involve

better understanding by a college employee of a related job function at the central office or by a central office staff member of related positions or areas at the college level. Understudy projects such as these often occur in the business affairs areas with a college director of business operations understudying the associate vice chancellor of business affairs. Many college-to-college understudy experiences occur in student services areas and usually relate to the role of the registrar's office or the counseling center as they may be coordinated at another campus. In this capacity, for example, a college associate registrar would understudy the role and operations of a registrar at another college.

Special Projects have not b en utilized as extensively as understudies and internships. They have, however, produced some excellent studies and allowed staff to do extensive research in needed areas. The following special projects are among those which have been conducted: Student Marketing, Productivity, Lifelong Learning, High School Liaison Program, Individual Retrieval System, Wellness and Four-Day Summer Sessions. Program coordinators plan to highlight this component of the Career Development Program in the future by citing special project topics which would be beneficial to both the institution and the individual.

Coordination and Cost

The CDRP coordinator operating out of the District Office is responsible for publicizing the program, facilitating the selection process, planning the special activities for participants and serving as a resource to mentors and participants during their project timeline. The coordinator serves mainly as a facilitator for the program's success. Decisions pertaining to selection of participants and project assignments are handled at the supervisory level for each employee involved with final approval obtained through the college president. Mentors are selected by the applicant or through assignment by the project coordinator if the applicant has no preference.

Initial financial support for the Career Development and Renewal Program in 1974 was about $50,000; this amount included a grant from the Texas Education Agency for the preparation of twelve modules relating to community college issues. Other initial expenses pertained to the use of consultants for work sessions and replacement costs for faculty interning. There is currently no budget for the program. No line item account is established to fulfill the program objectives. No money is exchanged among the colleges nor is a participant given any salary incentive to participate. Costs incurred are in-kind and specifically relate to the time of staff coordinators and minor costs resulting from production of participants' notebooks and written internal communication. Colleges do pay for the participant's travel expenses to-and-from location sites if the participant does not receive a monthly travel reimbursement. Occasionally, an unusual project endeavor may require staff time replacement (i.e., part-time instructors), but this is rare and is the decision and responsibility of the college supporting the project. Most participants' time is voluntary and over-and-above required job responsibilities. Funding for special functions such as a luncheon at orientation is provided through the DCCCD Foundation. If carefully planned, a similar program of this nature at other institutions should require only a minimal initial investment and additional allocation of resources as deemed appropriate by the institution.

Program Activities

The orientation session for Career Development and Renewal Program participants provides a thorough overview of the program and its expectations. Top DCCCD leaders are present to speak and interact with participants. Selected past-participants are also present to offer suggestions and guidance to the new class. Mentors are encouraged to attend the orientation. A notebook is provided containing a form for the preparation of goals and objectives, relevant reading material concerning community colleges and the DCCCD, and a schedule of the work sessions to be offered.

The work sessions are offered in the fall semester each year. A participant may, however, schedule his/her project activities at any time including the preceding summer or the following spring semester. These workshops are designed to provide professional growth training, information concerning the operation of the DCCCD and an opportunity for participants to interact with one another. Work session topics generally cover communication and organizational climate, effective leadership and decision-making, and general operational procedures of the DCCCD. Many workshops are adapted from materials used by the Higher Education Management Institute (HEMI). When time allows, participants are surveyed as to their special interest regarding work session topics. An additional work session is planned if sufficient interest is expressed in other topics.

Special project activities include attendance at a Board of Trustees meeting with a pre-meeting overview of Trustees' responsibilities and the Board meeting agenda. Other special activities may involve interviews by participants with selected DCCCD leaders, attendance at major DCCCD council meetings, visitations to other colleges and further professional readings. A group of twelve modules was originally prepared for required reading by participants, but with the rapid changes in community colleges these modules are presently recommended reading until they are appropriately updated. The HEMI modules are also recommended to participants for additional study. Participants are encouraged to take advantage of as many special activities as possible as involvement in this program virtually offers an open door to meet with leaders, explore issues with peers, and receive answers to questions concerning the operation of the District.

Program Expansion

Current plans call for expansion of the Career Development and Renewal Program into university and business settings. A Professional Renewal Exchange Program (PREP) component was piloted the spring of 1982 between Richland College (DCCCD) and Southern Methodist University. Based on the positive results of this pilot, the exchange program will be expanded to include professional interchange with

other local colleges and universities. An "Outreach to Business" component of the Career Development and Renewal Program will also be piloted the fall of 1982. This component will be designed to allow selected staff to understudy local business and industry leaders to examine managerial strategies, organizational climate and productivity. These expansions of the current Career Development and Renewal Program framework will allow DCCCD staff even more opportunities for renewal and growth.

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